

1

The Greek and Roman gods

1.1. THE GRECO-ROMAN PANTHEON

Greek religion has had a great influence on western art and culture.

The Greeks were **polytheistic**, which means they believed in the existence of many gods. These immortal gods looked human but had special powers and they could control the forces of nature.

The gods lived on **Mount Olympus**, the highest and most sacred mountain in Greece. Each god symbolised a particular ability or aspect of life (fire, beauty, hunting, etc.).

The **Romans** adopted the Greek gods and gave them Latin names.



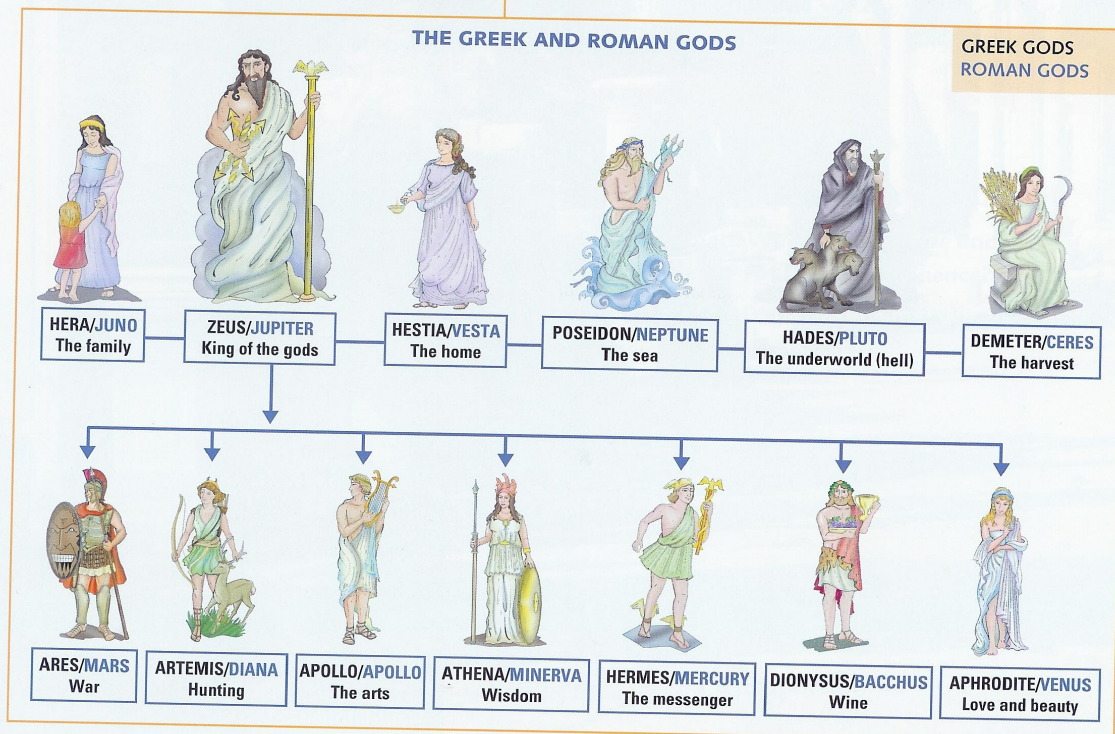
A Greek ceramic vessel showing the god Zeus.



Roman mosaic showing the gods Minerva, Juno and Venus in a mythological scene.

a What does polytheistic mean?

1 Listen and find. Which god is being described?



1.2. CULTS

The Greeks and Romans worshipped their gods in their homes as a **private cult**. Roman homes usually had a domestic altar. Here they worshipped the household gods (Lares and Panetes) and the spirits of their ancestors (Manes).

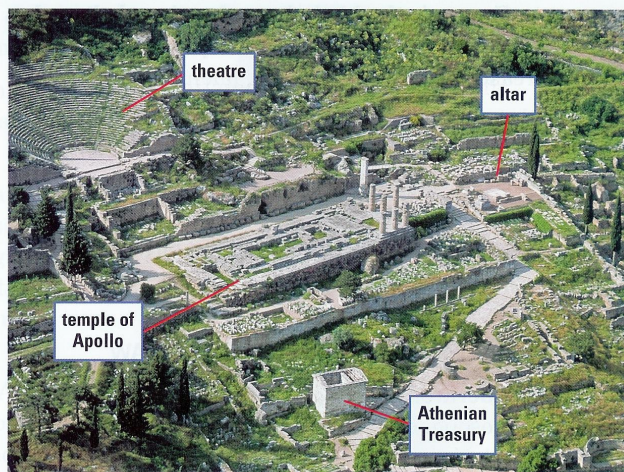
Each city was protected by a god. This god was worshipped in a **public cult** with sacrifices and processions.

The Greeks and Romans were very superstitious. Before any important event they wanted to know the will of the gods.

To know the will of the gods, the Greeks consulted an **oracle**. This was a priestess, the **Pythia**, who answered questions in the name of Apollo.

The Romans consulted **augurs** who interpreted the will of the gods by studying the flight of birds (**auspices**).

- b** How were private and public cults conducted in Greece and Rome?
- c** What was an oracle? And an augur?



From the 7th century BC, Delphi was a sanctuary for the god Apollo and the site of the Delphic oracle. It became one of Greece's major religious centres.



The Olympic Games originated in classical Greece. They were a religious ceremony in honour of Zeus.

Look

at the illustration of the Greek and Roman gods

- 1** Copy and complete the table below.

GREEK NAME	ROMAN NAME	GOD OF...	SYMBOL
Zeus	Jupiter	King of the gods	Lightning

ACTIVITIES

- 2** List the differences between the Greek and Roman cultures.
- 3** Complete the sentences.
 - a) The Greek and Roman gods had special but looked
 - b) To worship their gods, the Greeks and Romans conducted a cult at home and a cult in the city.

3 Greek architecture

The architecture of the Greeks is based on **harmony** and **proportion**.

The Greeks made buildings of great beauty. Their dimensions were related to human dimensions. Their largest buildings were the **temple** and the **theatre**.

They did not use the arch or the vault. Instead they used vertical columns and horizontal beams.

- a** What were the largest public buildings in Ancient Greece?



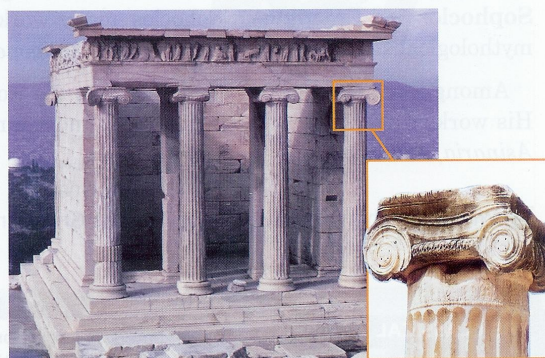
Treasury of Athens (Delphi), in the Doric style.

3.1. THE CLASSICAL ORDER

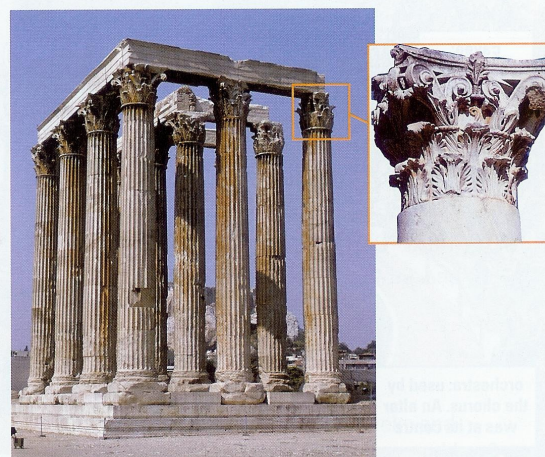
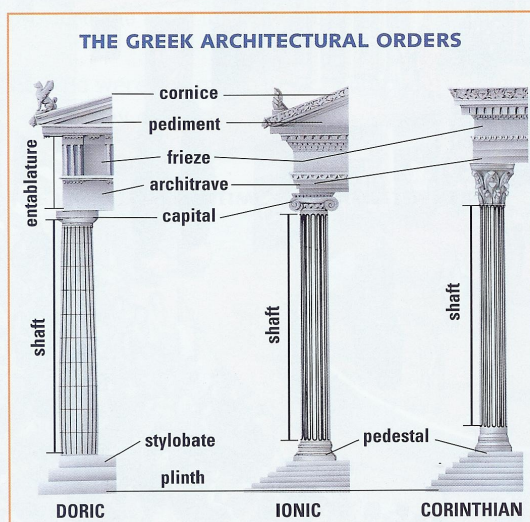
The desire for proportion produced three **orders**, or architectural styles:

- **Doric**, which was sober without adornments on its broad columns.
- **Ionic**, which is characterised by its slender columns and rich decoration.
- **Corinthian**, which was a variety of the Ionic and is characterised by its elaborate capitals decorated with acanthus leaves.

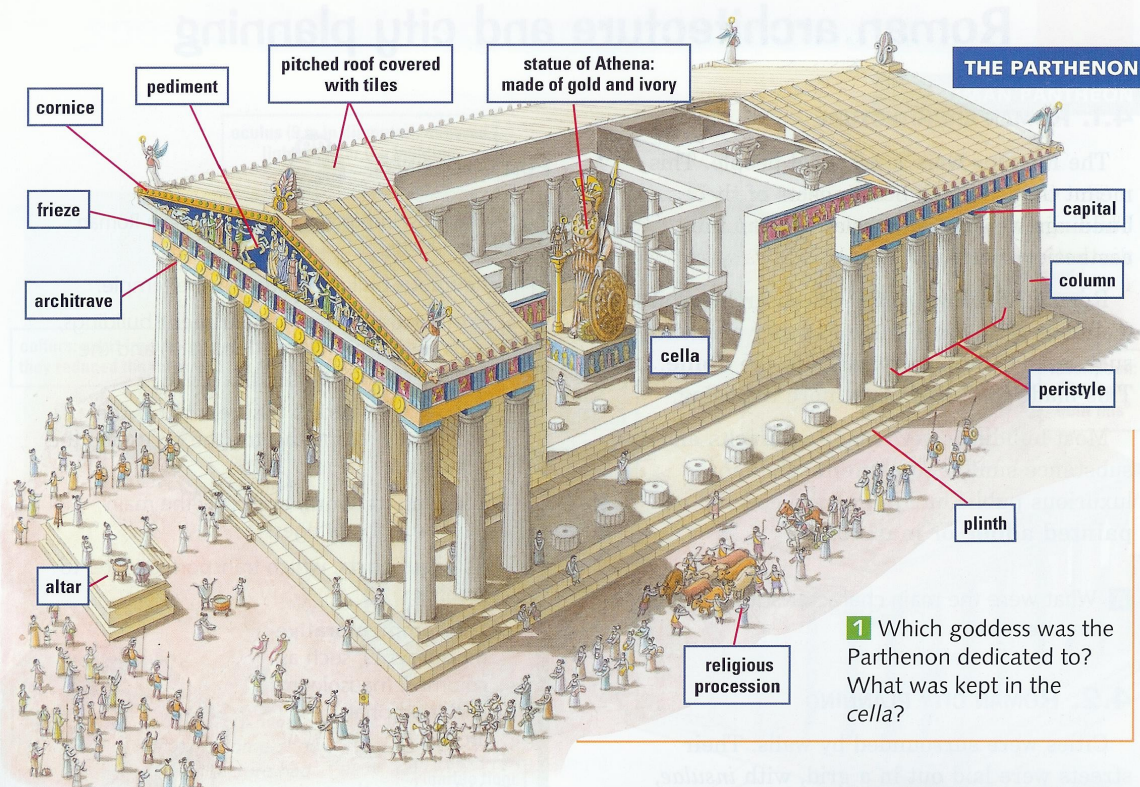
- b** What are the three orders of Greek architecture?



Temple of Athena Nike, in the Ionic style.



Temple of Olympian Zeus, in the Corinthian style.



1 Which goddess was the Parthenon dedicated to? What was kept in the cella?

3.2. TEMPLES AND THEATRES

Worshippers could not enter the **temples**. The ceremonies and sacrifices happened in the open air at an **altar** at the temple entrance.

The temple was rectangular with the **cella** in the centre. This was where the statue of the god or goddess was kept.

Temples were often surrounded by rows of columns, forming the **peristyle**. The outside of the temple was decorated with sculptures on the **pediment** and the **frieze**.

Theatres were built on hillsides. The tiers of seats were on a slope and in a semi-circle. This design helped acoustics and visibility. The **skene** and the **orchestra** were on the flat part below.

C Where did sacrifices happen: in the temple or in the theatre?



The Greek theatre of Epidaurus was built in the 4th century BC.

1 Where was it built? What are its separate parts?

ACTIVITIES

1 Mark the architectural feature according to the style: D (Doric), I (Ionic) or C (Corinthian).

slender columns
broad columns
rich decoration

elaborate capitals
acanthus leaves
little adornment

4

Roman architecture and city planning

4.1. ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

The Romans were a practical people. This meant that the technical aspects of their buildings were more important than the aesthetic aspects.

Roman buildings mixed Greek architecture (columns or pediments) with other elements, such as the **arch**, the **vault** and the **dome**. This made their buildings more imposing.

Most buildings were made of **bricks** and a substance similar to **cement**. The more luxurious public buildings were covered in **painted adobe** or **marble**.

a What were the main characteristics of Roman architecture?

4.2. ROMAN CITY PLANNING

Cities were surrounded by walls. Their streets were laid out in a grid, with *insulae*, blocks of houses, built in rows.

The Roman city was based on two main elements: the **cardo** (a main street that went from north to south) and the **decumanus** (that went from east to west).

The intersection of these two streets formed a large square known as the **forum**. The most important public buildings were in the forum.

b What were the main characteristics of a Roman city?

1 What was at the centre of the city?

2 What public buildings can you see in the diagram?

3 What were *insulae*? Can you find them on the diagram?

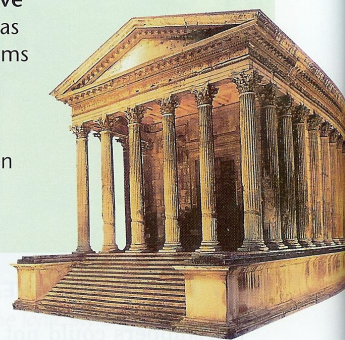
PUBLIC BUILDINGS

29

The most important public works in a Roman city included:

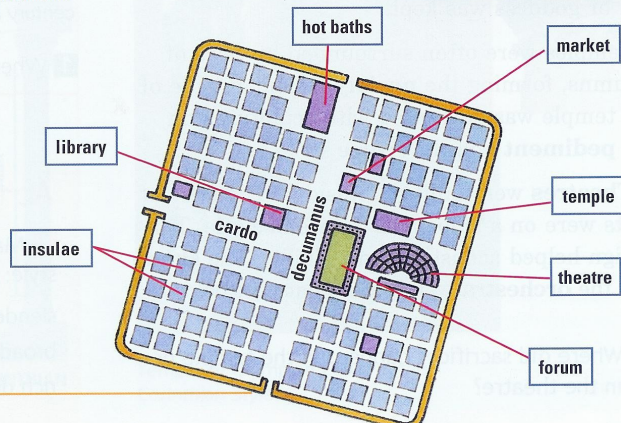
- **Religious** buildings, such as the temple.
- **Administrative** and **government** buildings, such as the forum (public square) and the basilica (courts of justice).
- Spaces dedicated to **leisure**, such as the theatre, the amphitheatre, the circus and the hot baths.
- The **road network**, especially the main roads and the bridges.
- The **aqueducts**, which transported water to the cities.
- The **commemorative monuments**, such as columns, mausoleums and triumphal arches.

■ What were the main public works in a Roman city?

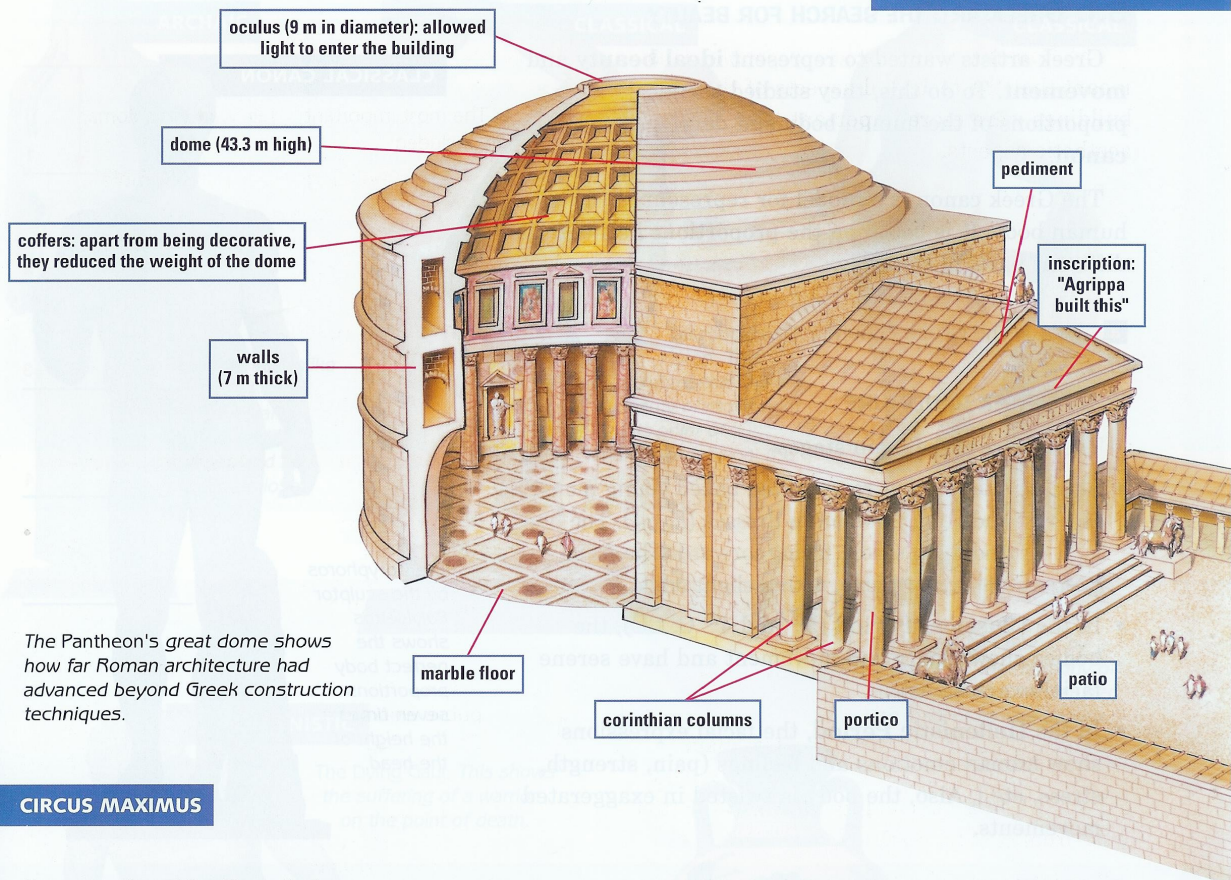


The Maison Carrée (Nîmes, France). Roman buildings like this one were usually built on a podium.

PLAN OF A ROMAN CITY

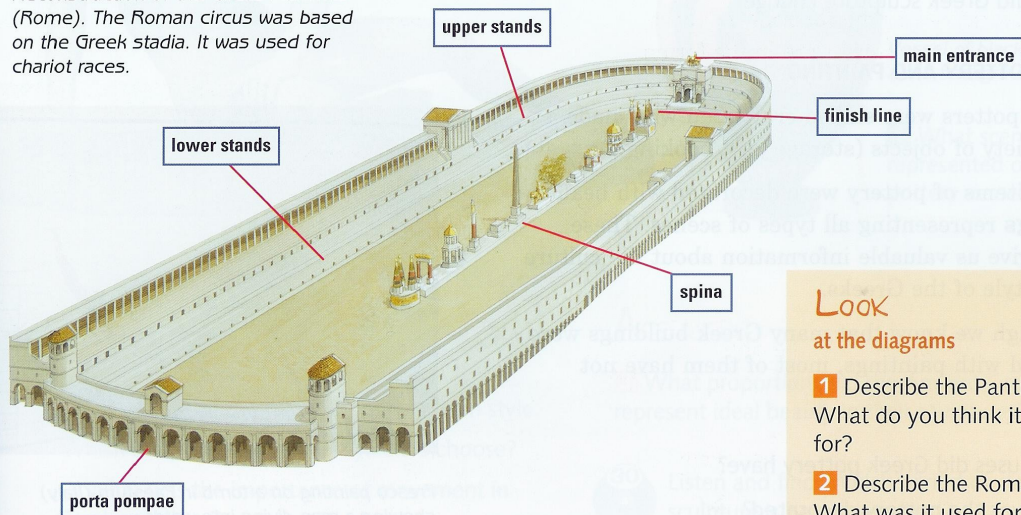


THE ROMAN PANTHEON



CIRCUS MAXIMUS

Reconstruction of the Circus Maximus (Rome). The Roman circus was based on the Greek stadia. It was used for chariot races.



Look at the diagrams

- 1 Describe the Pantheon. What do you think it was used for?
- 2 Describe the Roman circus. What was it used for?

5

Sculpture, pottery and painting in Greece

5.1. GREEK ART: THE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

Greek artists wanted to represent **ideal beauty** and **movement**. To do this, they studied the ideal proportions of the human body and developed the **canon**.

The Greek canon is a model for representing the human body. It is based on the proportions between the different parts of the body.

a What is the Greek canon?

5.2. GREEK SCULPTURE

There were three main stages:

- The **Archaic Period** represented naked young men (*kouroi*) and young women in dresses (*korai*). The body is in a standing position, facing forward. The facial expression is inscrutable, with a slight smile.
- In the **Classical Period** (5th and 4th C. BC), the bodies show agility and movement and have serene facial expressions.
- In the **Hellenistic Period**, the facial expressions show human emotions and feelings (pain, strength, stress, etc.). Also, the body is twisted in exaggerated movements.

b How did Greek sculpture change?

5.3. POTTERY AND PAINTING

Greek potters were skilled craftsmen who made a wide variety of objects (storage jars, cooking pots, etc.).

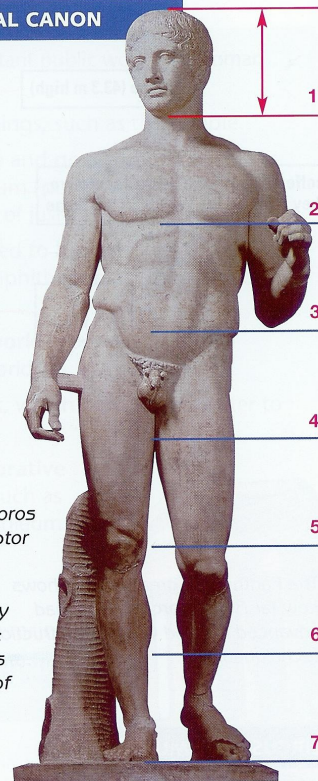
Many items of pottery were decorated with beautiful **paintings** representing all types of scenes. These images give us valuable information about the culture and lifestyle of the Greeks.

Although we know that many Greek buildings were decorated with paintings, most of them have not survived.

c What uses did Greek pottery have?

d How was the pottery decorated?

CLASSICAL CANON



The Doryphoros by the sculptor Polykleitos shows the perfect body proportions: seven times the height of the head.

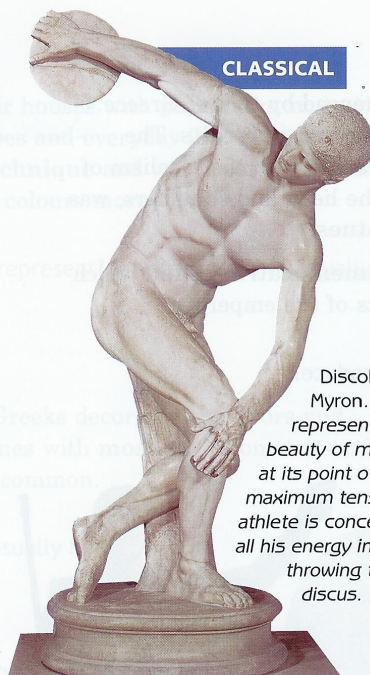


Fresco painting on a tomb in Paestum (Italy) showing a man diving into water.



ARCHAIC

Peplos kore. Unlike the male kouroi, female korai statues were dressed and had their feet close together.



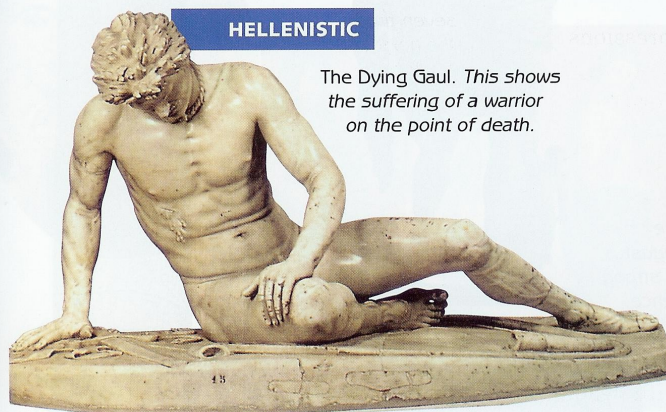
CLASSICAL

Discobolus of Myron. This represents the beauty of movement at its point of maximum tension: the athlete is concentrating all his energy into throwing the discus.



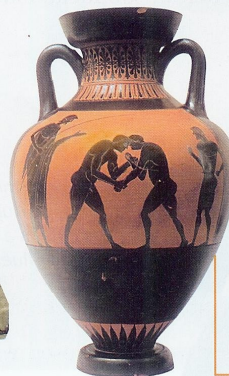
CLASSICAL

Aphrodite of Knidos, by Praxiteles. The harmony of her proportions makes her an ideal of female beauty.



HELLENISTIC

The Dying Gaul. This shows the suffering of a warrior on the point of death.



Vessel of black figures on a red background.

1 What scene is represented on this pottery vessel?

Look at the sculptures

- 1 Make a list of the main features of each style. Which sculptural style did Polykleitos choose?
- 2 What was the importance of movement in Greek sculpture?

ACTIVITIES

- 3 What proportions did the Ancient Greeks use to represent ideal beauty in their sculptures?



Listen and find. Which period of classical sculpture is being described?

6

Sculpture, painting and mosaic in Rome

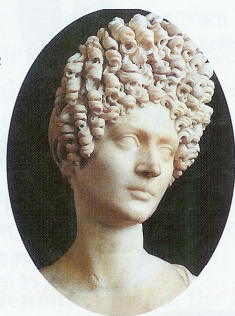
6.1. SCULPTURE: ROMAN REALISM

Roman sculpture was strongly influenced by that of Greece. However, the Romans innovated by **making portraits**. The realistic portrayal of the person contrasted with the idealism of the Greeks. The **bust**, showing only the head and shoulders, was very popular, as were **equestrian statues**.

Another popular form was the **commemorative relief**, which showed the gestures and achievements of the emperors.

a What innovation did the Romans introduce?

Bust: Believed to be Julia, daughter of the Emperor Titus.



Statue of the Emperor Augustus, which has a strong Greek influence.



Equestrian statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.



Relief on Trajan's Column in Rome (2nd C. BC). It tells the story of the Emperor Trajan's military victories.



6.2. PAINTING

The Romans decorated their houses with **painted murals** of mythological scenes, landscapes and everyday life. They were produced using the **fresco technique** and were protected with a layer of wax, which made the colours more vivid.

- b** What did Roman paintings represent? Where were they usually painted?



6.3. MOSAIC

Both the Romans and the Greeks decorated the floors and walls of their palaces and homes with **mosaics**. Geometric and figurative designs were most common.

- c** What designs did mosaics usually have?



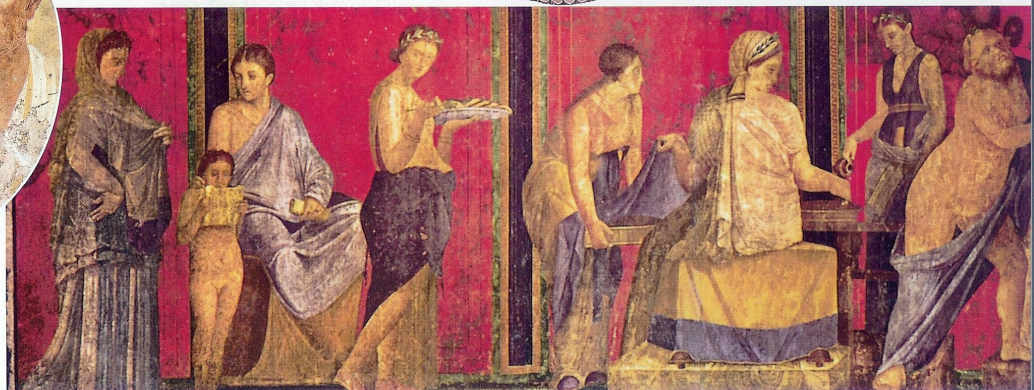
Portrait of a baker and his wife.



Roman mosaic with a geometric design.

Many Roman mosaics showed everyday scenes like in the image of street musicians above.

Painting from the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii.



Look at the sculptures

- 1 What is the difference between *portraiture*, *busts*, *equestrian statues* and *commemorative reliefs*?
- 2 What type of sculpture is Trajan's column? And the statue of Marcus Aurelius? And Julia, daughter of Emperor Titus?

ACTIVITIES

- 3 Answer true (T) or false (F). Then correct the false sentence.
 - a) The Romans introduced realism into classical sculpture.
 - b) Romans decorated their floors with paintings.